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MedCenter Extra

BOSTON MEDICAL CENTER, BOSTON UNIVERSITY SCHOOLS OF MEDICINE, PUBLIC HEALTH AND DENTAL MEDICINE

Sept. 30, 1997

Informational picketing begins as labor negotiations continue

As the hospital's contracts with the unions expire on Tuesday, Sept. 30, representatives of the hospital and the unions representing BMC employees are working hard to forge fair and equitable new contracts. After several months of negotiations, constructive agreements on many issues have been reached, but some differences remain.

Union negotiators have notified the hospital that the unions will engage in informational picketing on Wednesday, Oct. 1, at 2 p.m.

"Our hard-working negotiating team is working intensively and cooperatively with the unions to reach an agreement that is fair and responsive to employees, while taking into account the serious financial challenges BMC is facing in the current highly competitive health care market," says Patricia Webb, vice president of Human Resources.

The hospital has proposed, among other things, enhancements in health insurance, wages and holiday compensation. The proposed health insurance package will equalize health insurance benefits for everyone and save employees out-of-pocket expenses of \$1 million per year. The hospital has also offered to increase compensated holidays for all employees to six each year and allow the unions to choose among Labor Day, Memorial Day and Martin Luther King Day.

As *MedCenter Extra* went to press, the hospital team was waiting for a response from the unions regarding a three-year economic proposal that would cover from Oct. 1, 1996 to Sept. 30, 1999. Specifically, BMC has given the unions the opportunity to make recommendations on a wage compensation structure that achieves equity for all employees.

This action will likely generate media activity in the coming days. As always, the first priority of the hospital and the employees is maintaining quality health care and ensuring the trust and confidence of patients.

While this is a difficult situation, the hospital is optimistic about reaching an agreement with the employees and will continue to provide updates in the coming days. ♦